



# USAID | TURKMENISTAN

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Natalya Akmuradova

Manager for the USAID Community  
Connections Program

USAID contractor

American Councils for International Education

Phone: (993-12) 33-06-96; 33-10-16,

E-mail: [ccashgabat@inbox.ru](mailto:ccashgabat@inbox.ru)

Web: <http://americancouncilstm.org>

### **USAID ANNOUNCES 2009 COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS THEMES**

Ashgabat – December 3, 2008 – The U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) has launched its fourth year of the Community Connections Program in Turkmenistan and in 2009 will organize study tours for four groups of ten Turkmen specialists in the following areas: local governance, alternative energy technologies, city management, and emergency medicine.

Interested individuals should fill out and submit applications available at American Councils for International Education office in Ashgabat and the American Corners in Mary, Turkmenabat, and Dashoguz.

Successful applicants will travel to the United States for 3-week practical training. As part of the program, individuals will be living with American families, so that during this trip they gain not only professional knowledge, but also learn more about the American culture.

The USAID Community Connections program provides an important opportunity for Turkmen and American citizens to work together to address common professional challenges while expanding their social and cultural understanding. As professional communities of both countries rapidly become integrated, opportunities for positive relations between Americans and Turkmen are increasingly important.

Since the beginning of the Community Connections program, 113 specialists had gone on training to the United States. The participants represented the following professional areas: community activism, HIV/AIDS prevention, small business development, food processing, agricultural credit, maternal and child health, school management, agriculture, mass media, tourism, and infectious disease surveillance. Each of these individuals not only enhanced their own job performance, but are also contributing to the development of their sector at a broader level. "Meetings with U.S. businessmen have considerably changed my worldview," said Serdar Chovdurbayev, who participated in a study tour on small business development and now actively collaborates with the Union of Entrepreneurs and Manufacturers of Turkmenistan to create a more favorable climate for business development in the country.

The Community Connections program is one of the many programs made possible by the American people through the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). USAID programs support Turkmenistan's community organizations, help agricultural enterprises to improve their productivity and competitiveness, and assist the Government of Turkmenistan in its efforts to adopt international health care practices.